

SALES & MARKETING MANAGEMENT

FEBRUARY 1992
A BILI PUBLICATION
FOUR DOLLARS

HIRING & TRAINING

Do Your Salespeople Have
What It Takes To Stay Competitive?



**S&MM
ROUNDTABLE**
Executives Discuss
The Technology
Connection

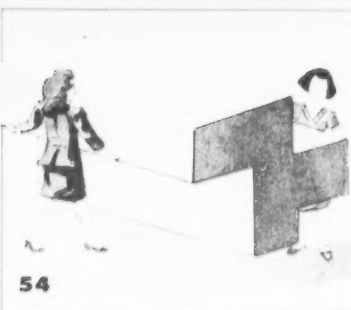
TELEMARKETING
Telefocus: Creating
Synergy Between
Your Telemarketing
And Sales Efforts

**SALES
MANAGEMENT**
From Salesperson
To Manager:
Transition and Travail

FEBRUARY 1992

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SALES & MARKETING MANAGEMENT



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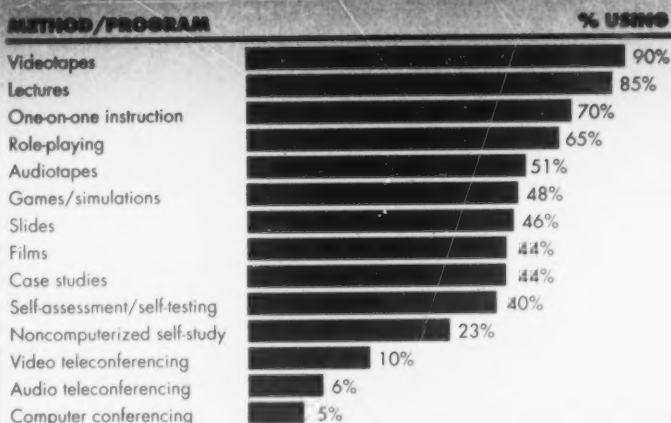
By involving your employees in setting goals, you're virtually guaranteeing improved performance.

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SUPPLEMENT HIGHLIGHT

Selecting a Vehicle: Instructional Methods Used in Training



Notes: Responses were gathered from a number of different industries and job types, including training, human resources, sales & marketing, and customer service.

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post-training increases and reward their progress. They should be given easy, attainable goals they can feel good about. Every small success is important. Mona, for example, was ini-

tially given a goal of asking for one referral. The next day it was two.

4. A follow-up program for managers and trainers to monitor progress and provide additional advice and sup-

port, as needed.

Sales training that omits any of these ingredients overlooks a crucial part of the package and takes a major chance that could have a significant negative impact on the ultimate success both of individual salespeople and companies. Sales training that includes all of them closes the gap and ensures that there are no missing links.

If your salespeople aren't asking for referrals, aren't making prospecting phone calls, are continually finding excuses for not calling on decision makers, are spending their time planning instead of calling, or are displaying some of the other specific job-related fears mentioned here, they may be showing symptoms of call reluctance. If you suspect this to be the case, you'll be on the right track by conducting a more complete analysis and utilizing the results in a comprehensive training program that combines the techniques to overcome these behaviors with the techniques for successful selling. ☐

Dennis Fox is the founder and president of the Client Development Institute, a training firm based in Great Falls, Va., that is certified in the Dudley and Goodson approach to "call reluctance."

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2. Career pattern: Does candidate have a plan and purpose? Do steps show progress and development? Does candidate have realistic goals and expectations?

C. Personal traits

1. Maturity: Can candidate effectively interact at multiple levels with

checking, however, by incorporating it into your selection system.

The following story indicates how important it is to do a thorough job of checking references: We were hiring a salesperson to represent our company in a major metropolitan area. Honesty, integrity, and good ethics in our rep were

(two jobs removed) drove 20 miles from a job site to get to a pay phone to tell us of his experiences with the candidate. It seems the police discovered the applicant stealing company records during a routine night check. Naturally, he hadn't volunteered that information to us in his résumé or in our interview, and our questions hadn't revealed the problem. It was only through conscientious reference checking that the problem was uncovered. That one step saved us from making a poor hiring decision. Instead, we went with the second candidate, whose reference checks were all positive.

How do you get good reference checks in today's environment, though, when many previous employers won't tell you anything for fear of a lawsuit or other ramifications? First, former employer references have always been guarded and therefore should be considered only as secondary checks. Anyway, when hiring salespeople, your primary reference checks should be with customers. ▶

How you define, screen, and select your candidate is as important as making the offer.

business associates?

2. Planning skills: Does candidate show signs of being a good self-manager?

D. Summary points

1. Money: Does the offer meet candidate's needs? Is this a good step up in earnings?

2. Challenge/opportunity: Is this a major move forward for the candidate in job scope and responsibility?

You should be able to develop a full page of relevant and important points against which your candidates can be compared. Then it becomes the responsibility of the hiring team (those who participated in the interview process) to conduct a forced choice comparison ranking of the candidates (no ties allowed) on each relevant point.

Each candidate should be given a point value in each comparison rating (5 = excellent, 4 = very good, 3 = good, 2 = fair, 1 = poor). As the senior member of the hiring team, I had the regional sales manager that the candidate would be reporting to do the evaluation. That person would talk his or her way through each rating point, assign values to each candidate, and explain why they were rated as they were. My job was to state agreement where it existed and challenge the evaluator when I was in disagreement.

Completing the candidate comparison test will prove either that one candidate is clearly the best choice or that the total values each one received were relatively close and any of several candidates could be your choice. At this point you can then go by gut instinct.

CHECKING REFERENCES

Most employers either skip this vital step or do it so poorly that it becomes useless. You can take the stress and strain out of reference

important to us in order to maintain our company's good reputation in the marketplace. We narrowed the field to two qualified candidates, each of whom gave us permission to check references. One of the candidates' previous employers

SUPPLEMENT HIGHLIGHT

Investing Your Time: Length of Sales Training in Selected Industries

INDUSTRY GROUP	AVG. TRAINING PERIOD (MONTHS)
Agriculture	5.7
Amusement & recreation services	2.0
Business services	4.1
Chemicals	4.5
Communications	4.2
Construction	5.0
Electronic components	1.5
Electronics	3.4
Fabricated metals	3.5
Food products	2.8
Instruments	2.7
Insurance	5.5
Lumber & wood products	2.7
Machinery	5.6
Manufacturing	3.3
Office equipment	2.8
Paper & allied products	6.0
Primary metal products	4.5
Printing & publishing	5.5
Rubber & plastics	6.5
Wholesale (consumer)	1.5
Wholesale (industrial)	3.9
Average	4.0

Note: Industry groups reflect categories selected and reported by Dartnell Corp. The overall average has been calculated by S&MM, based on data from the 22 industries listed.

SOURCE: Dartnell Corp.; 26th Survey of Sales Force Compensation, ©1990, Dartnell Corp.

Customers will give you the best reading on the kind of salesperson the candidate is. During interviews, ask candidates to list four important customers and explain the results they achieved with each. Then, if the applicant turns out to be your No. 1 candidate, ask for permission to check with these customers.

Of course, to get customers and former employers to respond as fully and openly as they can, you'll need to prepare a well-thought-out reference check, and systematizing this difficult step will undoubtedly make it more productive. Instead of shooting from the hip and putting your respondents on the defensive, prepare a solid opening statement to explain the purpose of your call, followed by a series of questions designed to get as much information as possible in this restricted environment. Briefly, the opening statement should cover:

- Your name, company, and title.
- Why you're calling. Explain the position you're offering (territory manager); the industry (safety products); the territory (state of Ohio); and the fact that this is a reference check.
- An assurance of confidentiality. You don't want to jeopardize the applicant's current position; ask about the reference's willingness to answer your questions.

Making your introductory request as explicit as possible puts references more at ease. In fact, I've never had a reference turn down my request. Once you have their cooperation, however, the real key to a successful check is to ask the right questions and give the respondent ample opportunity to be expansive in answering. Obviously, the questions need to be planned and prepared ahead of time. Here are a few questions I've used successfully with former customers of the applicants I was interviewing:

- How would you rate the candidate against other salespeople who currently call on you? Top third? Middle third? Bottom third?
- Why did you choose this ranking for the candidate?
- Did the candidate appear to be well planned and prepared to call on your account?

Despite the fact that customers will usually tell you more about the candidate's competency as a salesperson than former employers will, those employers still need to be contacted. As with customers, you'll need a good opening statement and a series of well-structured questions. While talking with former employers, your listening

skills need to be especially sharp. You must try to ascertain if the respondent is giving you controlled answers simply because it's policy, or if they're trying to avoid giving a negative reference for fear of legal ramifications. Generally, employers give very positive references for those who deserve them and follow the policy of only confirming certain information for those they would give a negative reference to.

Obviously, there are other steps that can be incorporated into your hiring system—personality/honesty testing, sales simulations, and any other areas you feel are necessary to your selection process—but those I've listed

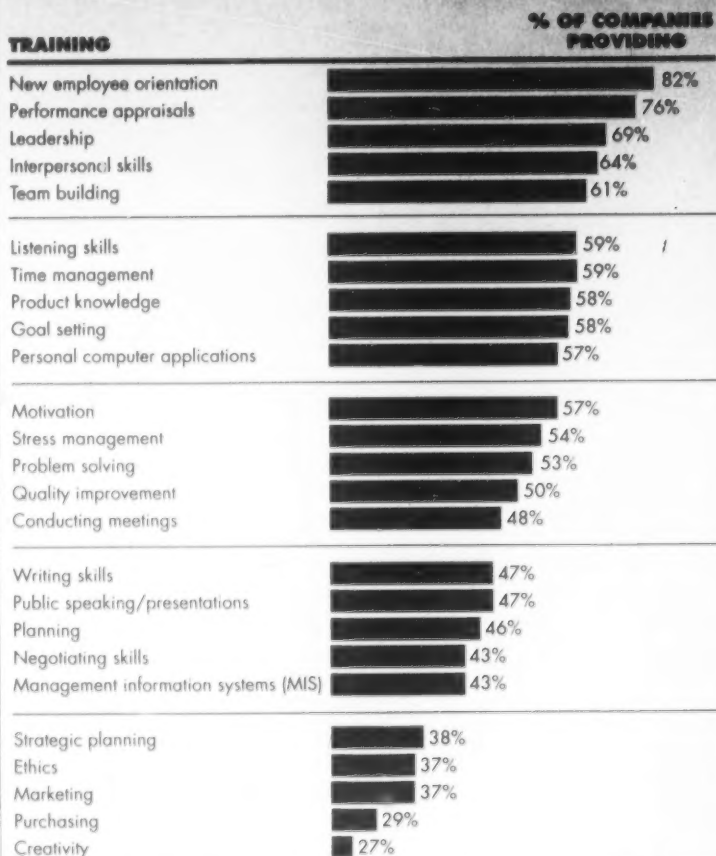
here are the most important. Try them out, and in addition to reducing the hiring hassle, you'll have the added advantage of establishing a consistency to your hiring practices that will in turn add to your competence in recruiting good, productive salespeople.

Finally, here are two other benefits to systematizing the selection process: With a successful hiring process in place, your salesperson turnover should plummet, and your company's bottom line will soar. □

Robert G. Head is president of Strategic Sales Services Inc. of Coshocton, Ohio, a sales and marketing consulting firm.

SUPPLEMENT HIGHLIGHT

Who Does What: Types of Training Provided by Companies



Note: Responses were gathered from a number of different industries and job types, including training, human resources, sales & marketing, and customer service.

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COMPUTERS

BY THAYER C. TAYLOR, SENIOR EDITOR

WHAT THE WELL-TRAVELED LAPTOP WILL NEED

Tomorrow's traveling salespeople may spend as much time deciding what goes with their laptops as they do packing their garment bags. That's because as the portables get smaller and lighter, the necessary accessories that make them useful multiply.

A handy checklist of helpful accessories is provided by Colin Haynes, veteran business writer and consultant, in *Portable Computing: Work on the Go* (Amacom, \$26.95). He recommends:

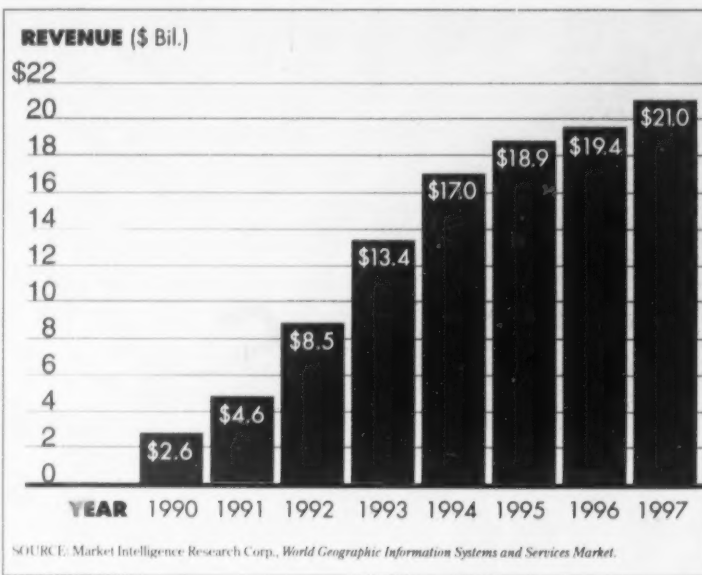
- **Charged batteries**, "so the computer is ready to be used; you may be asked to demonstrate it as you go through airport security checks."
- **Spare batteries**. Laptop batteries are notorious for short lives.
- **Application programs** either transferred to working disks or copied to your hard disk.
- **Data disks**. Take as many formatted disks as you'll need in order to create new files, and copies of files you'll use.
- **Additional backup and blank disks**, especially when traveling to remote areas or overseas.
- **Transformer and/or adapter** for protection against "dirty" power if your portable has to be plugged in.
- **Plug adapters** that convert two-pin outlets into three-pin ones.
- **Printer** for situations where hard copy output is desired.
- **Printer accessories**, such as adapter, paper and spare ink cartridge or ribbon, printer cable, spare printer batteries and/or recharger. Because computer and printer makers haven't standardized their adapters, you need one for each unit; the cable enables the computer to drive the printer.
- **Modem** (if your laptop doesn't have a built-in one) to handle communications such as sending in orders from your hotel room or checking your E-mail.
- **Modem accessories**, such as a spare battery and/or adapter, cables, and telephone hookup kit. The kit—for use when a hotel/motel has nonstandard jacks—is a combination of converters, plugs, and leads used to make a telephone connection.
- **Portable fax**. This is optional, in

GIS GROWTH ON A FAST TRACK

Long popular with government, utilities, and telecommunications firms, geographic information systems (GIS) software is catching on with marketers as a tool for uncovering local market sales opportunities. Last year, the number of GIS titles grew 45%, and the installed base rose 80%, according to S&MM's "Directory of PC-Based Sales & Marketing Applications Software" (December 1991).

GIS growth will get a fresh stimulus this year with machine-readable information from the 1990 Census. Another catalyst will be the meteoric growth of Microsoft's Windows 3.0 graphics-oriented platform. Several GIS vendors that target sales departments market Windows-based versions, enabling marketers to overlay GIS software with various kinds of numerical databases in order to get deeper analytical insights not gained from looking at tables of data.

According to Market Intelligence Research Corp. (MIRC), growth of the total GIS software and services market will climb 83% this year, with the steady inflow of lower-priced, higher-performing desktop PCs as the catalyst. Also contributing: the greater availability of digitized maps of the entire U.S.—down to the block level—that will give pinpointing clients and prospects a new dimension.



view of available hotel and public fax services, but required if you want to send graphics.

- **Hand-held scanner**, useful when doing research, such as copying a company report in the library.

In addition to providing hardware and software summaries, Haynes discusses the "road hazards" (industrial espionage, theft, viruses) involved with portables and the use of dedicated word processors vs. portable computers.

For more information, contact the American Management Assn., 135 W. 50th St., New York, N.Y. 10020.

OOPS! S&MM OVERLOOKS ITS OWN GOOD WORKS

The source of the data in "Automation: Veni-Vidi-Vendor" (December 1991) was, in fact, a survey of 200 sales and marketing automation software vendors conducted by *Sales & Marketing Management* that elicited a 15% response rate. S&MM regrets any false impressions created by this error.